

## COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH IN TEACHING SPEAKING SKILLS

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**Abstract:** *This study investigates the effectiveness of the Communicative Approach in developing speaking skills among EFL learners. Using a mixed-methods design, 60 intermediate-level students were divided into an experimental group, taught through communicative activities, and a control group, taught through traditional methods. Pre- and post-tests, classroom observations, questionnaires, and interviews were employed to collect data. Results revealed that the experimental group demonstrated significant improvement in fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, accuracy, and overall communicative competence. Qualitative data confirmed increased learner confidence, motivation, and engagement. The findings suggest that the Communicative Approach is highly effective in fostering oral proficiency and creating learner-centered, interactive classrooms.*

**Key Words:** *Communicative Approach, Speaking Skills, EFL Learners, Oral Proficiency, Task-Based Learning*

**Annotatsiya:** *Ushbu tadqiqot ingliz tilini chet tili sifatida o'rganayotgan o'quvchilar orasida gapirish ko'nikmalarini rivojlantirishda Kommunikativ Yondashuvning samaradorligini o'rganadi. Aralash uslub (quantitative va qualitative) asosida 60 nafar o'rta darajadagi talabalar eksperimental guruh (kommunikativ mashqlar orqali) va nazorat guruhi (an'anaviy usul) ga bo'linib o'qitildi. Ma'lumotlar oldindan va keyin o'tkazilgan testlar, dars kuzatuvlari, so'rovnomalar va suhbatlar orqali yig'ildi. Natijalar shuni ko'rsatdiki, eksperimental guruhning nutq qobiliyati, lug'at boyligi, talaffuz, aniqlik va umumiy kommunikativ kompetensiyasi sezilarli darajada yaxshilangan. Sifatli ma'lumotlar o'quvchilarning ishtirokchanligi, motivatsiyasi va o'ziga bo'lgan ishonchi oshganligini tasdiqladi. Tadqiqot shuni ko'rsatadiki, Kommunikativ Yondashuv og'zaki nutqni rivojlantirishda va interaktiv, o'quvchi markazli darslarni yaratishda juda samarali.*

**Kalit so'zlar:** *Kommunikativ yondashuv, Gapirish ko'nikmalari, Ingliz tili chet tili sifatida, Og'zaki kompetensiya, Vazifa asosida o'qitish*

**Аннотация:** *Данное исследование изучает эффективность коммуникативного подхода в развитии навыков говорения у студентов, изучающих английский как иностранный язык. С использованием смешанного метода 60 студентов среднего уровня были разделены на экспериментальную*

группу, обучаемую с использованием коммуникативных заданий, и контрольную группу, обучаемую традиционным методом. Данные собирались с помощью предварительных и последующих тестов, наблюдений в классе, анкет и интервью. Результаты показали, что экспериментальная группа значительно улучшила беглость речи, словарный запас, произношение, точность и общую коммуникативную компетенцию. Качественные данные подтвердили повышение уверенности, мотивации и вовлеченности студентов. Исследование показывает, что коммуникативный подход является высокоэффективным для развития устной речи и создания интерактивного, ориентированного на учащегося учебного процесса.

**Ключевые слова:** Коммуникативный подход, Навыки говорения, Изучающие английский язык, Устная компетенция, Обучение на основе задач

#### INTRODUCTION:

The ability to communicate effectively in spoken English has become one of the most essential competencies in contemporary education, particularly in contexts where English serves as a foreign or second language. As global mobility, academic integration, and professional exchange continue to expand, the demand for learners who can express ideas clearly, negotiate meaning, and participate in real-life communication has significantly increased. Consequently, developing speaking skills has emerged as a central objective in English language teaching (ELT). However, traditional teacher-centered instructional methods often fail to provide learners with sufficient opportunities for authentic interaction, resulting in limited communicative competence and passive language use.

In response to these challenges, the **Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach**, commonly known as the communicative approach, has gained widespread acceptance as an effective methodology for enhancing learners' speaking proficiency. Rooted in the principles of interaction, meaningful communication, learner engagement, and authentic language use, CLT shifts the focus from structural accuracy to functional and purposeful communication. This paradigm emphasizes the importance of fluency, negotiation of meaning, and real-world tasks, encouraging students to use language as a tool for conveying information, expressing opinions, and solving problems.

A growing body of research suggests that communicative techniques—such as role plays, information-gap tasks, pair and group discussions, problem-solving activities, and task-based interaction—significantly contribute to learners' oral fluency, confidence, and pragmatic competence. Despite its global recognition, the

implementation of the communicative approach in many educational contexts, including EFL settings, faces several pedagogical constraints. These include large class sizes, limited exposure to English outside the classroom, insufficient instructional materials, and teachers' varying levels of methodological preparedness. Therefore, a deeper investigation into the effectiveness of CLT in teaching speaking skills remains both relevant and necessary.

The present study aims to explore how the communicative approach can be effectively applied to improve speaking skills among English language learners. It examines the theoretical foundations of CLT, identifies common challenges in its classroom implementation, and evaluates students' responses to communicative activities. The findings of this research are expected to contribute to the improvement of teaching practices and provide practical recommendations for educators seeking to enhance learners' communicative competence through more interactive and student-centered pedagogical approaches.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW:**

The communicative approach, or Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), has been extensively examined in second language acquisition (SLA) research, particularly for its impact on the development of speaking skills. Early theoretical foundations of CLT were influenced by Hymes' (1972) concept of communicative competence, which broadened the scope of language proficiency beyond grammatical accuracy to include sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competencies. Building on this framework, Canale and Swain (1980) further systematized communicative competence into four interrelated components: grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence. These studies established the theoretical basis for communicative language teaching, positioning communication as the central goal of language instruction.

Richards and Rodgers (2001) highlight that CLT shifts instructional priorities from the mastery of linguistic forms to the use of language in meaningful contexts. According to their analysis, communicative teaching fosters fluency, promotes real-life interaction, and creates a learner-centered environment where students actively engage with language. Brown (2007) supports this claim, arguing that communicative activities—such as role plays, problem-solving tasks, and pair or group work—promote negotiation of meaning, which is fundamental for developing oral fluency. These principles align with Long's Interaction Hypothesis (1996), which asserts that interactional modifications and negotiation facilitate language comprehension and output.

Several empirical studies demonstrate the positive effects of CLT on learners' speaking performance. Littlewood (2013) finds that task-based and communicative activities significantly enhance learners' confidence, spontaneity, and fluency. Savignon (2002), in her longitudinal research, emphasizes that communicative competence develops best through continuous exposure to authentic communication rather than isolated grammar practice. Similarly, Nunan (2015) confirms that communicative tasks improve learners' pragmatic competence by encouraging them to express opinions, ask questions, and participate in real-world conversations.

Despite its effectiveness, the literature also indicates challenges in implementing CLT across diverse educational contexts. Studies by Li (1998) and Bax (2003) document that teachers in many EFL environments struggle with CLT due to large class sizes, limited instructional materials, low student proficiency, and insufficient opportunities for authentic communication outside the classroom. In addition, some teachers lack training in communicative methodologies and still rely on traditional grammar-translation methods, which restrict learners' speaking practice (Karavas-Doukas, 1996). These findings suggest that while CLT is theoretically sound and pedagogically advantageous, its success depends on contextual factors and the readiness of teachers and learners.

Recent research also emphasizes the role of technology-enhanced communicative environments. According to Godwin-Jones (2018), digital tools—such as online discussion platforms, video communication apps, and interactive simulations—create additional spaces for authentic communication and support the development of oral skills. These studies indicate that integrating CLT with technology can address some traditional classroom limitations by increasing learners' exposure to meaningful interaction.

Overall, the literature demonstrates a clear consensus on the effectiveness of the communicative approach in fostering speaking skills. However, the challenges of implementation highlight the need for further research on context-sensitive strategies, teacher training, and technological integration to maximize the benefits of CLT in EFL settings.

## **METHODOLOGY:**

This study employed a **mixed-methods research design** to comprehensively investigate the effectiveness of the communicative approach in developing learners' speaking skills. The quantitative component of the study focused on measuring improvements in oral proficiency through standardized pre- and post-tests, while the qualitative component explored learners' and teachers' perceptions of communicative

activities through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews. The combination of these methods provided a well-rounded understanding of both the measurable outcomes and the experiential aspects of communicative language teaching.

### **RESULTS:**

The results of the study demonstrate a clear and significant impact of the communicative approach on the development of learners' speaking skills. Analysis of the speaking proficiency tests showed that the experimental group made considerably greater progress than the control group. The experimental group's mean score increased from 57.4 (SD = 6.2) on the pre-test to 78.9 (SD = 5.5) on the post-test, whereas the control group showed a modest improvement from 56.8 (SD = 5.9) to 64.2 (SD = 6.0). Statistical analysis confirmed that the gains made by the experimental group were highly significant ( $p < 0.001$ ), while the progress of the control group was minimal ( $p = 0.047$ ). A comparison of the two groups' post-test results revealed a significant difference in favor of the experimental group ( $t = 8.21$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating the superior effectiveness of communicative instruction.

Further examination of the test components revealed that the experimental group demonstrated notable improvement in all key areas of speaking performance, including fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary range, accuracy, and overall communicative competence. Fluency increased by 34%, communicative competence by 41%, vocabulary by 29%, pronunciation by 26%, and accuracy by 18%. In contrast, the control group exhibited only slight gains, particularly in fluency and communicative competence, with their progress remaining limited due to fewer opportunities for meaningful oral interaction.

Qualitative findings supported the statistical results. Classroom observations showed that students in the experimental group actively engaged in communicative tasks, produced longer and more spontaneous utterances, and interacted with greater confidence. Their lessons were characterized by dynamic pair and group work, negotiation of meaning, and authentic language use. Conversely, students in the control group participated less, relied heavily on the teacher, and typically produced brief, controlled responses. Questionnaire results further indicated that 87% of the experimental group felt more confident speaking English after the intervention, citing increased motivation, reduced anxiety, and more enjoyable speaking activities as key benefits. Only 32% of the control group reported similar improvements.

Interviews with teachers and selected students reinforced these findings. Teachers noted that communicative activities encouraged learners to use English more naturally,

develop conversation strategies, and express ideas more freely. Although they acknowledged challenges such as classroom noise and time management, they agreed that the communicative approach significantly enhanced students' oral proficiency.

Overall, the results provide strong evidence that the communicative approach is highly effective in developing learners' speaking skills. Students taught through communicative methods achieved greater fluency, confidence, and communicative competence than those instructed through traditional, teacher-centered methods.

## DISCUSSION:

The findings of the study indicate that the Communicative Approach has a significant positive impact on the development of speaking skills among EFL learners. Overall, students who were taught through communicative activities demonstrated higher levels of fluency, accuracy, and confidence compared to those taught with traditional grammar-translation methods. These results support earlier research suggesting that real-life interaction, active communication, and meaningful tasks play a fundamental role in improving oral proficiency.

One of the key observations of the study was the increased willingness of learners to participate in classroom discussions. Communicative tasks such as role-plays, pair-work dialogues, and problem-solving activities created a supportive environment in which students felt comfortable expressing themselves. This aligns with the theory that reduced affective barriers lead to greater language production.

Another important aspect revealed in the study was the development of functional language use. Students in the communicative group were more capable of using English spontaneously, negotiating meaning, asking for clarification, and responding naturally during conversations. This suggests that communicative activities promote not only linguistic competence but also sociolinguistic and strategic competence.

However, the study also identified several challenges. Some learners initially struggled with the open-ended nature of communicative tasks and felt uncertain without explicit grammatical explanations. Additionally, large classroom sizes and limited instructional time sometimes restricted the full implementation of communicative techniques. These challenges indicate that while the Communicative Approach is effective, it requires careful adaptation to local classroom conditions.

Despite these limitations, the study confirms that the Communicative Approach is a practical and impactful method for enhancing speaking skills in EFL settings. The results suggest that incorporating consistent communicative practice, along with balanced grammar support, can create a more interactive and productive learning environment. Future research may explore specific communicative activities best

suiting for varying proficiency levels, as well as long-term effects on language retention and performance.

### **CONCLUSION:**

The present study provides compelling evidence that the Communicative Approach is highly effective in enhancing learners' speaking skills in EFL contexts. Both quantitative and qualitative findings indicate that students exposed to communicative, task-based activities demonstrated significant improvements in fluency, vocabulary use, pronunciation, accuracy, and overall communicative competence compared to those taught through traditional methods. The approach not only improved linguistic proficiency but also fostered greater learner confidence, motivation, and willingness to participate in real-life communication.

Despite some challenges, such as initial learner hesitation and constraints related to class size and instructional time, the overall outcomes underscore the pedagogical value of communicative strategies. These findings suggest that integrating communicative activities into English language curricula can lead to more dynamic, learner-centered classrooms and promote meaningful language use. Future research could explore the long-term effects of the Communicative Approach on oral proficiency and examine its effectiveness across different age groups, proficiency levels, and educational contexts.

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